



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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October 8, 2009

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE, INC., FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY – A
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES PROVIDER**

We completed a contract compliance review of Children's Institute, Inc., Foster Family Agency (Children's Institute or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) provider.

Background

DCFS contracts with Children's Institute, a private non-profit community-based organization to recruit, train and certify foster parents for the supervision of children DCFS places in foster care. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Children's Institute is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. The Agency oversees a total of 17 certified foster homes in which 16 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Children's Institute is located in the Second and Fourth Districts.

DCFS pays Children's Institute a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Foster Care Rates Bureau. Based on the child's age, Children's Institute receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these funds, the Agency pays the foster parents

between \$624 and \$790 per month, per child. DCFS paid Children's Institute approximately \$679,000 during Fiscal Year 2008-09.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of our review was to determine whether Children's Institute was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and the County contract. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files and interviewed the Agency's staff. We also visited a number of certified foster homes and interviewed the children and the foster parents.

Results of Review

The foster parents indicated that the services they received from Children's Institute generally met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. In addition, the six foster homes we visited were well maintained and in compliance with CDSS Title 22 regulations. Children's Institute also ensured that social workers' caseloads did not exceed the maximum established by CDSS Title 22 regulations and that staff working on the County contract possessed the education and work experience required. However, Children's Institute did not always comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, four of the findings noted in this report were also noted in our prior monitoring report dated August 23, 2007. We specifically noted the following:

- One of the four case files reviewed contained documentation of serious behavioral incidents that required the Agency to prepare Special Incident Reports. For example, the child tried to strangle a dog and punched another child in the face causing a bloody nose. However, the Special Incident Reports were not prepared.
- Three of the four case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children were visited weekly by Children's Institute's social workers during their first three months of placement as required. During this period, six required visits were not documented. Our prior review also noted that Children's Institute did not always ensure that children were visited weekly during the first three months of placement.
- One of the four children's initial medical and dental examinations were not conducted within the required timeframes. The medical examination was conducted four weeks late and the dental examination was conducted six weeks late. Our prior review also noted that Children's Institute did not always ensure children's medical and dental examinations were conducted timely.

- Three of the four Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) reviewed did not contain documentation that the children and the foster parents were offered the opportunity to participate in the development of the NSPs.
- Three of the four NSPs reviewed were not approved by the DCFS social workers as required. In addition, one of the four NSPs reviewed was prepared one month late. Our prior review also noted that Children's Institute did not always ensure that NSPs were prepared timely or approved by the DCFS social workers.
- Three of the four foster parents did not complete 15 hours of annual continuing education. The three foster parents completed 12 hours of training.

The details of our review along with recommendations for corrective action are attached.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with Children's Institute on August 10, 2009. In their attached response, Children's Institute management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations (Attachment I). We also notified DCFS of the results of our review. In their response (Attachment II), DCFS indicates they will follow up on our recommendations during their next monitoring review tentatively scheduled for December 2009.

We thank Children's Institute for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (213) 253-0301.

WLW:MMO:JET:DC:AA

Attachments

- c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Ted Myers, Chief Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Susan Kerr, Senior Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Raul E. Alvarado, Chairman of the Board, Children's Institute FFA
Mary M. Emmons, President and CEO, Children's Institute FFA
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE, INC., FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
FISCAL YEAR 2008-09**

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Children's Institute, Inc., Foster Family Agency (Children's Institute or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We visited three of the 17 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Children's Institute billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in November and December 2008 and interviewed the four foster parents and three foster children placed in the three homes. We also observed one toddler who was too young to interview. In addition, we reviewed the case files for four foster parents and four children and we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

The foster parents indicated that the services they received from Children's Institute generally met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. The toddler we observed appeared well cared for and happy. In addition, the three foster homes we visited were well maintained and in compliance with CDSS Title 22 safety regulations. However, Children's Institute needs to ensure that children's case files, Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) and foster parent certification files contain all the required information. We specifically noted the following:

Children's Case Files

- One (25%) of the four case files reviewed contained documentation of serious behavioral incidents that required the Agency to prepare Special Incident Reports. For example, the child tried to strangle a dog and punched another child in the face causing a bloody nose. However, the Special Incident Reports were not prepared and submitted to the DCFS social worker, DCFS' Out of Home Care Management Division, and other relevant parties. As a result, the DCFS social worker was not informed about these serious behavioral incidents.
- Three (75%) of the four case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children were visited weekly by Children's Institute's social workers during their first three months of placement as required. During this period, six required visits were not documented. Our prior review also noted that Children's Institute did not

always ensure that children were visited weekly during the first three months of placement.

- One (25%) of the four children's initial medical and dental examinations were not conducted within the required timeframes. The medical examination was conducted four weeks late and the dental examination was conducted six weeks late. Our prior review also noted that Children's Institute did not always ensure children's medical and dental examinations were conducted timely.

Needs and Services Plans

- Three (75%) of the four NSPs reviewed did not contain documentation that the children and the foster parents were offered the opportunity to participate in the development of the NSPs.
- Three (75%) of the four NSPs reviewed were not approved by the DCFS social workers as required.
- One (25%) of the four NSPs reviewed was prepared one month late.

Our prior review also noted that Children's Institute did not always ensure that NSPs were prepared timely or approved by the DCFS social workers.

Foster Parent Certification and Foster Home Visitation

- Three (75%) of the four foster parents did not complete 15 hours of annual continuing education. The three foster parents completed 12 hours of training.

Recommendations

Children's Institute management ensure:

1. **Special Incident Reports are prepared when required.**
2. **Children are visited weekly during the first three months of placement by the Agency's social workers.**
3. **Children's initial medical and dental examinations are conducted within the required timeframes.**
4. **Children and their foster parents are offered the opportunity to participate in the development of NSPs.**
5. **NSPs are prepared within the required timeframes.**
6. **NSPs are approved by the DCFS social workers.**

7. Foster parents complete the required number of annual continuing education training hours.

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

Determine whether the program participants received the services that Children's Institute billed to DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed three children placed in three Children's Institute certified foster homes and four foster parents to confirm the services the Agency billed to DCFS. In addition, we observed one toddler who was too young to interview.

Results

The foster children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents and the foster parents indicated that the services they received from the Agency generally met their expectations. In addition, the toddler we observed appeared well cared for and happy.

Recommendation

None.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether Children's Institute social workers' caseloads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed the Agency's administrator/supervising social worker and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers and supervising social worker.

Results

Overall, the Agency's two social workers carried an average caseload of nine cases and the Agency's administrator/supervising social worker supervised two social workers.

Recommendation

None.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**Objective**

Determine whether Children's Institute staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

Verification

We interviewed the Agency's administrator and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

Results

The Agency's administrator/supervising social worker and social workers possessed the education and work experience required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, Children's Institute conducted the required hiring clearances and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract.

Recommendation

None.

PRIOR YEAR FOLLOW-UP**Objective**

Determine the status of the recommendations reported in the Auditor-Controller's prior monitoring review.

Verification

We verified whether the outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2006-07 monitoring review were implemented. The report was issued on August 23, 2007.

Results

The prior monitoring report contained nine outstanding recommendations. Children's Institute fully implemented five recommendations and partially implemented two

recommendations. As indicated earlier, the findings related to recommendations 2, 3, 5, and 6 contained in this report were also noted during the prior monitoring review.

Recommendation

8. **Children's Institute management fully implement the outstanding recommendations from the prior monitoring report.**



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President and
Chief Executive Officer

August 3, 2009

County of Los Angeles
Department of Auditor-Controller
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Room 525
Los Angeles, California 90012-5427

To: Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke, Chair
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

Re: Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to Contract Compliance Review Draft Letter
dated 07/13/2009.

Children's Institute, Inc. is in receipt of the draft report created following the contract compliance review, which was conducted by the Auditor-Controller's Contract Monitoring Division for fiscal year 2008-09. We would like to personally thank the Auditor-Controller's Office and their staff, Alice Marutani, for her professional manner and sensitive approach during the program review of our Foster Care program.

Children's Institute, Inc., Partners Foster Care Program has reviewed the above referenced report and submits the following CAP.

Recommendation #1

It is recommended that CII's management ensure Special Incident Reports are prepared when required.

Corrective Action Plan:

All FFA Social Workers and certified foster parents will receive specialized training on the reporting of Unusual and Special Incidents, and shall immediately report all incidents of injury, child abuse and illegal behavior to the FFA Social Workers. All FFA Social Workers shall immediately report all incidents to the FFA Director, and complete a Special Incident Report (SIR) via the internet

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President, The Colloquies

Adrienne K. Lee
President, The CHIRP

Dusanika Schmidt
President, Los Angeles

Mary M. Emmons
President and
Chief Executive Officer

(iTrack System) and submit to the FFA Director no more than 24 hours after the report of the incident. Copy of SIR will be filed in the child's chart.

Recommendation #2

It is recommended that CII's management ensure children are visited weekly during the first three (3) months of placement by the Agency's Social Workers.

Corrective Action Plan:

All children placed in CII's certified foster homes will be visited weekly (every 7 days) by FFA Social Worker assigned to the certified foster home during the initial 3 months of placement. Each visit will be documented by having the foster parent and child (if age appropriate) sign a service log and a weekly visit progress note completed by the agency social worker. The service long and weekly visit progress note will be filed in the child's chart.

Recommendation #3

It is recommended that CII's management ensure children's initial medical and dental examinations are conducted within the required timeframes.

Corrective Action:

All agency social workers and foster parents will receive a comprehensive training that identifies all of the required compliance elements for the initial medical and dental examinations. This training will be provided a semi-annual basis to insure continue adherence to this requirement. Compliance will be monitored during weekly supervisions between the program director and agency social worker.

Recommendation #4

It is recommended that CII's management ensure children and their foster parents are offered the opportunity to participate in the development of Needs and Services Plan.

Corrective Action:

FFA Director and all FFA Social Workers were trained on 07/10/09, by DCFS Out-of-Home Care's Anthony McDaniel, on the Needs and Services Plan. To ensure that children and foster parents are offered the opportunity to participate in the, efforts and contributions will be documented in the NSP in addition to their signatures on the signature page.



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President, The CHIPS

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President, Los Angeles

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Recommendation #5

It is recommended that CII's management ensure Needs and Services Plans are within the required timeframes.

Corrective Action:

A tracking tool was developed to monitor that NSPs are completed within the required timeframes. This includes both initial NSP and quarterly reports. Additionally, all FFA Social Workers received training and are utilizing the tracking tool in weekly supervision to address all content required for the development of the Initial and Quarterly Reports. Overall, this thorough process ensures that all Needs and Services Plans submitted to CSW's are approved in a timely manner.

Recommendation #6

It is recommended that CII's management ensure Needs and Service Plans are approved by the DCFS Social Worker.

All agency social workers will receive training on meeting the requirement of county social worker signatures on NSP. . All reports will be scanned/ emailed or faxed to CSWs. All efforts to obtain the signature will be documents in the case file along with support documents (fax confirmations, copy of sent emails, etc.)

Recommendation #7

It is recommended that CII's management ensure foster parents complete the required number of annual continuing education training hours.

Corrective Action:

CII will insure that foster parents complete 15 hours of continuing education training. CII has a comprehensive foster parent training program that addresses a variety of topics that impact children and foster parents. These 3 hour trainings are held monthly except for November and December. Training attendance is evidence by a training certificate and logged in our computer tracking system. Also, based on the needs and skill sets of our certified foster parents, an individual training may be provided on an as needed basis.



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Recommendation #8

Raul E. Alvarado
Chairman of the Board

It is recommended that CII's management ensure full implementation of the outstanding recommendations from the prior review.

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Daphne Edwards Zins

Corrective Action:

To insure implementation of outstanding recommendations to prior monitoring reports – agency will document the trainings outlined in this CAP, and to have agency social workers sign acknowledgment and understanding of requirements. Quarterly review of charts that result in deficiencies will be documented in a performance improvement plan for the agency social worker and/or staff.

Please see Children's Institute's response to recommendations 2, 3, 5 and 6, contained in this report for our implementation plan of the outstanding recommendations from the prior review.

Vanessa Sykes, MS
Director

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President, Los Angeles

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PATRICIA S. PLOEHN, LCSW
Director

**County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

September 10, 2009

TO: Aggie Alonso, Chief Accountant-Auditor
Countywide Contract Monitoring Division

FROM:  Elizabeth A. Howard, Section Head
Out of Home Care Management Division
Foster Family Agency/Group Home Performance Management

Board of Supervisors
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**DCFS RESPONSE TO THE AUDITOR CONTROLLER'S CONTRACT REVIEW OF
CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE INTERNATIONAL, INC., FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY**

The Out of Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) has reviewed the Auditor-Controller's (A-C) August 18, 2009 final draft audit report of the contract compliance review of Children's Institute International, Inc. Foster Family Agency. In addition to Needs and Services Plans findings, the draft report noted documentation issues related to reporting required special incidents and required visits with the children, and untimely medical and dental examinations.

The Auditor Controller approved CII's August 3, 2009 Corrective Action Plan (CAP), which includes the agency's plan for noted documentation issues, special incident reporting, required visits with children, and untimely medical and dental examinations. However, in addition to CII's approved CAP, OHCMD will immediately request a CAP addendum to include verification of training of certified foster for special incident reporting and that CII indicate all Special Incident Reports (SIRs) be cross-reported to all required parties, (OHCMD, CSW, CCL, and law enforcement). The addendum will be due to OHCMD within 15 calendar days, September 25, 2009.

As these concerns did not rise to the level of abuse, the Auditor Controller did not report these concerns to the Child Protection Hotline or the OHCMD. DCFS will conduct a follow up visit regarding the Auditor Controller's recommendations to determine implementation of the approved CAP and addendum by December 2009.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 626-569-6804.

MG:EAH:EK

c: Wendy L. Watanabe, Auditor-Controller
Patricia Ploehn, Deputy Director, DCFS
Lisa Perrish, Deputy Director, DCFS
Marilynne Garrison, Division Chief, DCFS

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